

Dokis First Nation
Community Report for 2012 and 2013

This 4th consecutive community report was prepared to provide information and to update the membership on issues and developments that happened in/or impacted our First Nation in 2012 and 2013.

Prior community reports from 2006 to now are available on the Dokis First Nation website at www.dokisfirstnation.com for your perusal.

1. Leadership

Elections were held in May 2012 resulting in some changes in leadership positions.

Re-elected (4th term) – Chief Denise Restoule

Re-elected - Councillor Leonard Dokis

Re-elected - Councillor Roger Restoule

Newly elected - Councillor Derek Restoule

Newly elected - Councillor Chris Dokis

Newly elected - Councillor Gerry Duquette

Term of Office – May 2012 to May 2014

The result of the election provided for the return of some candidates in their former elected seats. This has been a positive in moving viable projects forward. It has been instrumental in long-term planning for the future growth and the future financial security of our Band.

Note: Councillor Leonard Dokis passed away in January 2013. Out of respect, his seat remained vacant for the remainder of his term.

2. Financial Administration

Our Band relies on the Federal Government as its main source of funding. Aboriginal and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) formerly the Dept. of Indian Affairs (DIA), provides funding to administer the affairs of the Band. This incorporates all infrastructure needs (housing, roads, public utilities, water, sewage, fire protection, public buildings, landfill site), all social needs, all municipal needs and municipal liability and all educational needs from pre-k to post-secondary.

Health Canada (FNIIHB) provides funding for the administrative transfer of on-reserve prevention health services. Their funding level is determined by our on-reserve population.

Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) are available to all membership and is approved directly by the Regional and National offices of Health Canada. This includes prescription drugs, dental, vision, hearing, equipment for special health needs and specialized referrals.

Since Government funding is not sufficient to meet all the growing needs of the community, strict adherence to budgets is a must. All staff, management and leadership are responsible for following the terms and conditions of the funding agreements. This is why sometimes certain requests made by membership cannot be accommodated and are denied. All staff are responsible to submit proposals to diverse agencies & provincial government for additional programs and services.

3. Financial Accountability

Upper management oversees the daily financial transactions while leadership approves annual budgets and all capital expenditures.

All programs must compile monthly financial reports to management and to the funding agencies to support expenditures incurred.

A detailed annual audit is submitted to all funding sources. It is also presented to our membership at a public community audit meeting. The audit of (2011-2012) and (2012-2013) were both positive audits showing that our Band continues to be in good financial standing for 8 continuous years.

Positive audits result from strict adherence and proper financial monitoring by staff, management, departments and leadership. Each and everyone needs to be commended for their involvement and commitment.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The daily operation of the Band and its services is monitored continuously by Management. Due to financial short falls, upper management is also responsible for human resources management.

Adherence to policies ensures compliance with safe guarding the integrity of the Band, the confidentiality of personal information and the safety of operation. Emphasis is placed on lines of communication which defines the lines of authority and clarifies roles and responsibilities. This ensures that Chief and Council do not overstep their role and do not micro-manage programs, services and the day-to-day operation.

Program staff and front-line workers continue to organize programs and deliver services that are geared to improve the health, safety, mental and social well-being of all community residents. These programs and services include but are not limited to:

- Road construction and maintenance
- Repairs and maintenance to public buildings and band rentals
- Fire protection and training
- Drinking water testing and monitoring
- Disease prevention and health education

- Mental health and addictions counselling and referrals
- Direct client home-help support services
- Hospital discharge visits, and progress monitoring
- School breakfast program
- Aggregate dining
- Community food bank
- Firewood heating assistance for seniors
- Formal education in on-reserve school, pupil transportation, post-secondary funding assistance, distance education/Contact North site supervision
- Library resources and computer access
- Membership registration, issuing status cards, ancestry inquiries
- Summer student employment, adult skills training, job and employment readiness training
- Child protection, youth and family support
- Social assistance
- Life skills teaching (cooking, sewing, personal care)
- Fitness and exercise
- Recreation, group outings
- Personal values teachings
- Cultural awareness and identity
- Community Policing services
- Personal and staff development
- Emergency response

All staff/programs are open to suggestions on how to improve or expand their areas of services.

5. Transparency/Communications

Public Band meetings are held monthly where the membership is given progress reports on local development and undertaking and are presented with the outcomes of how issues and concerns were addressed/resolved.

Chief and Council utilizes these meetings to seek community input and direction on how to proceed with matters that will affect the community and/or Band as a whole.

These meetings are a forum where the membership can request land and housing and where personal concerns, views and opinions can be expressed, whether positive or negative. It is also an opportunity for the leadership to clarify misinformation and local gossip.

Monthly newsletters from the Health Center and Band Administration are delivered door-to-door to all residences. These advertise upcoming events, provide program updates, employment opportunities etc...

The Dokis website keeps all members informed of what is happening at community level. However, since there is no dedicated person assigned to the website, it often is not updated on a regular basis.

Off-reserve band members are encouraged to provide or update their mailing address with the Band Office. This will facilitate and ensure that they receive information and are involved in voting on major decisions that affect our First Nation.

6. Community Development

Special Anniversary – Our little Church will be 100 years old in 2014. It is the only historical building remaining in the community. Our ancestors, their efforts, the history of the Church and its many events will need to be acknowledged and celebrated.

Heated Change Room – The community has been fundraising for the past 2 years to construct a building adjacent to our multi-purpose covered rink.

Infrastructure Repairs – Upgrades to rental housing units are ongoing. Concentration has focused on energy efficiency (windows, doors, insulation), on washroom upgrades and on replacement of roofing shingles.

Installation of an air conditioning unit, new roofing, and new siding, new doors, and new steps for the Wellness Centre was funded by Health Canada.

Some units in the Elders Residence were upgraded where carpeting was replaced with hard flooring. This addressed concerns of allergies and mobility issues.

New Housing- 4 Band members were approved for individual housing loans of \$72,000.00. 2 members have deferred start of construction till 2014. Band housing loans are repayable and re-invested in the housing program.

Short-term revolving loans for minor housing repairs are available to those who qualify. Many homeowners have benefited from this program.

7. Economic Development

Okikendawt Hydro Project – An incredible amount of time was involved in applying and awaiting approvals from government agencies for permits, licences and lease agreements. Water management levels, species at risk, fish studies and environmental assessments all needed to meet the regulations of either the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, the Dominion Water Power Act legislation, MNR, Ontario Parks, Justice Canada, Dept. of Indian Affairs and local user and interest groups. The lengthy process involved in obtaining the Minister of Indian Affairs signature on crucial documents delayed the project by 1 year and increased the cost by \$7 million.

Construction started in July 2013 with an anticipated operational date of March 2015. The channel at the Portage Dam has been deepened and the construction of the generating station is presently underway.

Clearing of the transmission line from Dokis of Golden Valley and putting up of hydro poles is in process.

A) Benefits during Construction Stage

Employment: The contractors for the project have employed a large segment of our local workforce, both male and female.

Infrastructure: Part of the Keso Bay Road leading to the worksite has been widened and surfaced with proper aggregates. The Band's 1st bailey bridge was re-enforced to accommodate the heavy rock trucks. A bypass access road was built from the quarry to the cemetery landing. These improvements were at "no cost" to the Band.

Dokis Quarry – Has been expanded and set-up as a fully operational quarry. The contractor is purchasing the Band's aggregates for building the powerhouse, coffer dams, roads etc...

Trailer Site – The project Contractor cleared and landscaped lots to set up accommodations on site. A well has been drilled and 2 field beds have been installed. Once the project is complete, the Band will have developed lots to allocate to Band members.

The Company leasing the trailers to the Construction Contractor entered into a land lease agreement with the Band. The Band will receive approx.. \$50,000 to \$60,000 for the length of the project. A few Band members gained employment working in maintenance and housekeeping with the Company owner.

Portable Cement Plant – Is set up along the main road. A well was drilled on-site for its water supply. This well will be of benefit to the community once the plant is removed.

B) Financial Benefits

Band members voted 97% in favor of the Hydro Project. The band has negotiated a 40% ownership share. Once the powerhouse is operational, the band will receive immediate financial revenue to put towards local needs. A portion of the revenue will be applied towards repaying the loan on our share of the construction costs. As the debt is paid down, the Band will have access to a larger portion of the generated revenue. Under the Partnership Agreement, the Band has the option of purchasing additional shares from the Developer.

C) Financial Planning

To ensure that the revenue from the hydro project is managed wisely, and allocated appropriately for the benefit of the community, a Trust is being set up where applications to access funds will be approved. Proposals will focus on economic development, community development, community infrastructure, education and health.

8. Roads and Bridges

Dokis Road: In 2011, the Minister of MTO resolved the long standing issue of the unsafe road condition and who is responsible for its maintenance. The road was upgraded through one-time funding from MTO. There still remains the issue that West Nipissing does not provide adequate and timely maintenance especially in the winter months.

Main Bridge: Numerous proposals were submitted over the course of 8 years for funding to repair the main bridge. However, all attempts were unsuccessful. In 2013, again after being denied, the Chief arranged a personal meeting with the Regional Director General of Indian Affairs to plead our case and within 3 days secured funding in excess of ½ million dollars. The repairs were completed in the fall of 2013.

9. Land Code

In November 2013, the Land Code received 85% approval by the voting membership. Beginning in April 2014, the Band will have full responsibility for its land management. With the increase in workload and with an increase in funding, our Lands Dept. will expand from a ½ position to likely 3 full-time positions.

10. Resource Management/Protection

Forestry – The First Nation is presently engaged in maintenance activities to remove diseased and poor growth trees in the forest. This will ensure that a healthy forest is generated in the next 15 to 20 years. The trees removed are used/sold as firewood.

Fisheries/Species at Risk – Each Spring, volunteers continue to collect pickerel eggs for the fish hatchery. Once they reach the “fry” stage, they are deposited in the French River.

Funding proposals were approved to undertake different fish studies on the Lake Sturgeon and the Pickerel species.

Water Projects – The community has partnered with Nipissing University and Guelph University to compile research on our drinking water sources and to gather historical knowledge on our access and different use of water. A teaching tool will be developed for use in our local school.

11. Ontario Graphite LTD

Dokis, Henvey Inlet and Wasauksing First Nations have signed an M.O.U with Ontario Graphite Ltd, a mining company extracting graphite from the site in Kearny, Ontario. As a collective, the Bands will negotiate a Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement.

12. Museum

A business plan has been developed to assist in our quest to get funding to build a museum/cultural centre. Unfortunately, funding for such an establishment is not readily available. However, historical research continues to be gathered and plans for a Museum are still alive.

13. Internship

Fed Nor provided funding for a 1 year youth internship in Economic Development. Youth development and succession planning is vital for future ongoing progress.

14. 2014 Big Chaudiere Dam Replacement

Public Works Canada is presently developing a Special Access Agreement in conjunction with the Band for this specific project. The Band's request to be included in this agreement are: purchase of our aggregates, local employment opportunities, and traffic control & community safety. The health and safety of our people should not be compromised during this 2 year project.

15. Donations Received

A big thank you to the Band member for his most generous donation of a 2 ton fire truck. Your generosity is so appreciated. This equipment is a tremendous asset to respond to fires in more remote areas.

A big thank you to our community members for their on-going support and donations to our local food bank. Without you support, others would often go hungry.

A big thank you to the tourist who gave money to purchase a freezer for the food bank.

Tons of appreciation for the "In Memorium" donations directed towards the heated dressing room and the fish hatchery. To everyone who supported and donated toward fundraising activities, it is much appreciated.

To all volunteers who donate their time to shovel the rink, sell tickets, prepare food or any other local efforts that needs your help – Thank You!!

16. Special Ceremonies

Our 1st Remembrance Day ceremony was planned and organized through our school. We were honored by the presence of a Veteran band member, who laid the wreath with our students. This was well attended by the community.

Our 1st Santa Claus Parade was held in December 2013. Good participation with decorated floats. Great community spirit!!

17. Employment

The employment office has made numerous attempts to provide training to upgrade skills for members to gain meaningful employment and fill all positions on our local community projects. Very few have taken advantage of these opportunities. Even though many have secured jobs, some have not been considered because of their poor work ethics, while others need to walk away from the old negative behaviors that drag them down.

The opportunities are there. It is an individual responsibility to find a job. Training along with personal development can open those doors.

18. Community Support

Community support and involvement is necessary for progress. Open honest communication is the key in engaging our members in making informed decisions when supporting local endeavours. Community support is the driving force that has enabled leadership to continue and to expand their efforts in exploring opportunities for community and economic growth.

Thank you for the continued support we have received. It is allowing our Band to move forward.

19. Conclusion

To be elected to represent and work for one's community requires commitment, dedication and to be able to work for the community as a whole, and not for individual, personal or financial gains.

Leadership has to make decisions that some people feel are wrong, while others constantly criticizes whatever decisions are made. It is the nature of the work.

There will always be challenges in life and it's our attitude that will determine whether one rises above these challenges and looks for the positives within them.

It should be everyone's priority to make Dokis a safe and healthy place to live. That can be done by working respectfully together as a community to bring positive changes and economic growth.

POSITIVE THINKING IS POWERFUL!

Chief Denise Restoule
for) Band Council
Feb 2014